

A reason for thanking the Lord

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Preacher: John Lowrie

[0 : 0 0] Morning everyone, nice to be with you again and to minister to you from God's Word. If you want to turn with me please to Philippians chapter 1, Philippians chapter 1. Can I just remind you about Wednesday, a couple of weeks ago we looked at our church and it's asked you to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the church. You remember we looked at a SWOT analysis, what are the strengths, what are the weaknesses, what opportunities is the Lord given, is what open doors might be here that we should maybe consider and what are the threats to those things being realized. And then once you do that then you basically start to look at just where we go from here, what might we want to start, what might we want to stop, what might we want to revise, it's good but we could tweak that and so forth. So can I ask you to do your homework for next Wednesday when you come, you've thought about your church, your strengths and weaknesses and as we share a few things, hopefully without full riot gear, we just share, we chat, we talk and that's a good exercise to do and it means that you have a good feel of your own church and how the Lord might be leading and guiding and what we can pray more effectively for. Rather than just going through the motions, we stop and we analyse and we think.

So can I encourage you to do that for this Wednesday and the floor will be yours and you get the chance to share what you feel are the strengths and weaknesses and opportunities and so forth.

There are a few of these sheets, I gave you these, these were printed out, I think it's maybe about half a dozen up the back, if you need one of them just grab one, I think it's behind the techie desk, you'll find them. If you want one of them, take one of them and that will show you where we're going.

Philippians chapter 1, let's read this together, we're only reading the first eight verses, this morning we're considering verses 3 through to 8 and so let's look at this prayer of thanksgiving, not so much the prayer itself, Paul will talk about what he's praying for, but we're looking at why Paul rejoiced in this church, what makes him thrilled. So let's read together the first eight verses of Philippians chapter 1 and we begin at verse 1. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you and all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart and whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. We'll end our reading there and next week we'll look at the prayer itself, but this morning we want to look at Paul's reason for thanking the Lord for this church. Let's ask for the Lord's help now as we come to his word. A loving Heavenly Father, we just still ourselves in your presence this morning. Perhaps, Lord, we've been rushing here and there. Our body might be still, but our hearts and minds are still running about. And Father, we do just pray as we come to your word now that we might be helped to be still and to know that you are God. So, Father, we pray that you will speak to us from your word. I pray, Lord, that we might use your word this morning to examine our own selves, our own walk with you. And at the same time, Lord, that you would give us cause to rejoice, to rejoice greatly, Lord, not so much in our own efforts, but for what you are doing in and through each one of us, each one of your children. So, Father, just encourage us, encourage us in our God and in our faith and in the gospel. And we ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. As many of you know, for the past good number of years, I've been ministering in England. And one thing that used to wind me up when I was in England, if somebody said to you, you Scots are mean, aren't you? It's just, it's amazing how that reputation creeps across the border.

[4 : 47] And you're mean. Now, don't ask John. He's mean. He'll not give you anything. He's Scottish. And nothing could be further from the truth. I'm sure you'll know that yourself. The Scots are some of the most generous people. And the way I always defended it was, I says, well, it's not that we're mean. We just don't like to waste money. We like to be good stewards. Every Christian wants to be a good steward anyway. But we like to look after what we've got. We like bargains and so forth. I don't know about you, but I quite like auctions. I like eBay. I don't mind eBay going on 20. Once I know if something's a good bargain. So, I was quite thrilled when I saw this, a police auction. Stuff so cheap, you'd think it must be stolen. It probably was. And I remember many years ago going to a police auction. And I thought, this will be great, Lucille. The bargains that you'll get in this place.

And I remember that they had all this stuff laid out that they were going to auction off. And I remember seeing this bag. It was a bag of watches. And there were Rolex watches in it. Here's an image of Rolex watches. And I thought, look at this, Lucille. Look, they're only, we might get this for a tenner.

Know that I like Rolex watches. I think they're ugly beasts. But I thought, I'll make a fortune. I'll get these and I'll sell them. And I remember the conversation with Lucille went something like, they must be genuine. Because after all, they're not going to arrest somebody for selling fake watches and then sell it themselves. So I thought, they must be genuine. And they're the police. They can't take them. So they're just auctioning these off. So anyway, I must have got three Rolex watches for about a tenner. And when I saw them, I opened the bag. They were obviously fake. They were all corroding, even in the bag. And I thought, what a waste of money that was. My heart just sunk. The fact that I thought I had about five grand's worth of watches and they weren't even worth the tenner. At least if they were made of chocolate, I could have eaten them. But what a lot of rubbish. And we don't like being ripped off. We don't like it when we expect so much from something only to realize we've been sold a dud or it's a fake. We don't like this in life. But one of the saddest areas that if you're a Christian here this morning that can almost break your heart or really disappoint you is when you meet somebody who professes faith, who professes to be a Christian, who will say, I'm a Christian, I walk with the Lord and so forth. But you look at their life and you're left wondering. And then maybe later on they just wander away from the Lord. That's very heartbreaking when you get people that you've known for a long time and you wonder, were they really saved? Were they a fake? Were they just pretending? Outwardly they looked like a Christian but they weren't so. That's what we're looking at this morning. Paul is writing to a church. He was only there, as you know, for a very brief time.

And there was the Macedonian call and they responded to this call. They went over into Europe and the first church there was being planted. And they were only there for a short time. But God opened hearts and Lydia and the Philippian jailer were saved. It was hard work for Paul. They were thrown into prison as well. They were eventually cast out. And Paul, as he did in his church planting ventures, he would always ask himself, are these people, how are they doing? Whenever he set off on another missionary journey, he would purposefully go back to those churches that he planted to see if they were really walking with the Lord. And this church is similar. He thinks, how are they doing? He's fairly confident. Epaphroditus comes and gives them gifts sent from the church. And Paul comes to the conclusion that they are genuine Christians. And that's what I want us to look at this morning. Given us reason to rejoice in the work of God that God does in us. Last time you remember, we looked at the tone of this letter. It's a very personal letter between Paul and this church. It's a joyful letter. He's full of joy in this for them and him, them for him. And he wants to encourage them to stand united, no division, and to stand firm in the gospel. Don't wander away from the gospel. And then in these opening words, look at what

Paul says. His first words to him, apart from the general opening, which is fairly common in letters between Christians in those days. Verse 3, he says, I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. And then in verse 7, it is right for me to feel this way about all of you. Since I have you in my heart, and whether I am in chains, in prison, or defending and confirming the gospel, in other words, operating freely, all of you share with me in God's grace.

[9 : 52] God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. Paul loves this church. He thrills at this church. He's full of joy for these believers. Now, what I want us to do then is, because there is a verse in this passage that we read, verse 6, that tells us why he is so thrilled, why he doesn't just thank them for who they are, but he thanks God for who they are. And we see in verse 6, he who began a good work in you. So, I want to look at three things then. Let's look at the first thing, reasons why Paul rejoiced. Reasons why, if you look at a Christian, you too can rejoice.

And you know many Christians, and that maybe every single one of us are a Christian here this morning, and you can look and you can say, I rejoice, I thank God for them. But what are the grounds upon which you thank God for another believer? Are they genuine? So, first of all, we see then that one of the reasons why Paul rejoices in this church, because it's obvious to the apostle Paul that they are a work of God. A Christian is a work of God. Before anything else, we are his workmanship.

It's great to realize that. When you become a Christian, you don't always realize how God works. I was saved in Kelvin Hall in May the 12th, 1980. I went in, the Lord convicted me of sin, I repented, I believed. From my perspective, I did it all myself, really. I chose him, he didn't choose me.

But when you study the scriptures, and you realize that God actually chose you, it wasn't so much that you chose him, that is not only humbling, that gives you cause for great rejoicing. And Paul mentions this right at the very beginning. I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you. And that's a great definition of a Christian. A Christian is primarily a work of God. It is quite something. Recognizing not only what God has done for us on the cross, but what God does in us when we become Christians. His work is powerful through the Holy Spirit.

He comes upon us. And you saw this with this church. You remember Lydia? Lydia was a praying woman. There was a bunch of women. They met, they regularly for prayer. Paul heard about them. He went down.

[12 : 27] And Paul, in Acts 16, we read these words, one of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. In other words, a God-fearer, but still didn't really know God.

The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. Paul could have all the strategies in the world, even the call. But unless the Lord opened Lydia's heart, his efforts in preaching would have been in vain. And that's what happened there. And then the conversion of the Philippian jailer, God worked powerfully that night in the prison, and the jailer was convicted of this. Christians are those who are chosen by God. And it has to be this way. There are many passages in the Scripture that state this. In many ways, you look at the Old Testament, and the Old Testament is there to help explain the New Testament. You'll never understand the New Testament if you don't understand the Old Testament. And there are types, and there are pictures as well. And as God chose the nation of Israel, they never chose him, he chose them. So the pattern is the same, that Christians are those who are chosen by God. It's not something new when you get into the New Testament. God had to choose them, but we choose God. God chooses us. One Peter, I don't know what Gerald was going to read, and I was just thrilled when I heard them reading from 1 Peter. 1 Peter. Peter knows how people are chosen by God. And he writes, Peter, an apostle of Christ Jesus, to God's elect who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. Then in chapter 2 of 1 Peter, he says, but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Jesus also made that fact plain in John 6, 44. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. That's why

I told you no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him. That is quite something. The God who in the very beginning said, let there be light works in a way equal to that power when he comes to me on May the 12th, 1980, and he says, let there be light to John. He speaks, and it simply happens. He chooses us. He pours his Holy Spirit in us, and we see. We are regenerate. That is a good theological word. We are granted new birth, new creation. It is as a father is responsible in many ways for the birth of his children. So, the father is responsible for your birth and for my birth. That is the right way to think it. That should really humble us. Remember when Peter was asked by Jesus, who do you say I am?

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. He didn't say 10 out of 10. Well done, Peter. You did your homework. He says, blessed are you, because this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. I mean, that's quite humbling, isn't it? That must have thrilled Peter.

The Father at that point was revealing the Son in Peter's life, and the Scriptures tell us that this choosing was we had been chosen in him before the foundation of the world. We were reading, Sully and I do a wee devotional thing together every morning. It's just a podcast, and in it was Jeremiah, and it was a call of Jeremiah. Well, basically, I knew you before you were born, and I set you apart.

[16 : 24] It's quite humbling. Even before he was born, before he was a twinkle in his mum and dad's eye, the Lord had decided he'd be born and set apart. It's quite something, and I've quoted Romans 8 a few times, that those whom God foreknew, he predestined. But those he predestined, he called. Those he called, he justified. Those he justified, he will glorify. We're between justification and glorification.

We're not fully glorified. But you're fully justified. You will not be more justified next week. You are justified. You're pronounced not guilty. There is therefore now no condemnation in you, but your glorification has yet to be. You're still popping tablets and all sorts of stuff.

You are not shining as the Lord wants us to be. So he calls us, and it has to be this way, because we have to be made alive spiritually. We are dead, finding it difficult, impossible to receive the things of God. Jesus said this, verily or truly, in fact, my version says, very truly. In other words, listen to this, and listen to it again. What I'm saying is important. No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water in the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, Father's Day. The Spirit gives birth to Spirit. You must not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again. And that is a work of the Spirit. We cannot. The Spirit blows wherever he will. Peter says in 1 Corinthians 2, the person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit, but considers them foolish and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. That's why when you witness to family and friends and they look at you, they just don't get it. You might as well literally be taking the guitar and singing Knees Up Mother Brown. That would probably mean more to them. It just bounces off them. They cannot receive it because they are in the flesh. They need to be made alive.

And that's why Paul says here that he who began a work in you—he'd already preached what God had done for them—but he who began a good work in you, God has done a work in them. And John, right at the very beginning of his gospel, to all who received him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. And then he tells us how this came about.

Children born not of natural descent, nor of a human decision, nor of a husband's will, but born of God. It is quite something. If you're a Christian, you have been born of God. Not your decision, primarily, but born of God. And Paul states that believers, when they become a Christian, are made alive from this dead spiritual state. Colossians 2.13, when you were dead in your sins and uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive. I don't think anybody would be crazy enough to say to me this morning, I gave birth to myself. My mother and father had nothing to do with this.

[19 : 45] I think you'd be tied up in a white jacket and thrown into a padded cell somewhere, or your medication would be ramped up a bit. Nobody would dream of saying that I gave birth to myself. And so it is with the Lord. It's very clear. God made you alive with Christ. As he raised Christ from the dead, so every believer is raised to life as well. Ephesians 2. As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. You used to walk according to the counsel and this world and so forth. You followed its desires and thoughts like the rest. We were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, verse 5, made us alive with Christ.

Even when we were dead in transgressions, it is by grace you have been saved. Nothing in us. Nothing in us. And it's quite something. And that's what Paul says in verse 7.

He's not only seeing the work of God that God has done in them, and he's convinced that God has begun a work. And if you can see evidence of this, that God has begun a work in somebody, you can have confidence that this is a Christian. And he says this, and he also knows about the grace of God. Look at verse 7.

It's right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart, whether I am in chains, I'm confirming the God. All of you share in God's grace with me. Grace is one of the nicest words in the whole of Scripture. We recognize it's grace that saved us. It's grace that keeps us.

The grace of God is something worth rejoicing in. And that is what Paul knows. He knows how this works. If God has chosen them by grace, this will show itself in works. Ephesians 2. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

[21 : 55] Remember the Great Commission. Go into all the world, and not to make converts, make disciples, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Obedience is a sign that we are really saved by grace. Lucille and I, we were looking for something to do yesterday, and I'd always wanted to go and see the Chippendale furniture place out at Gifford. I really, I'd have loved that. I'd have loved to have paid the thousands of costs to go in there and to work with wood. I just love working with wood. And to go out to that, they have an open day, same time every year, middle of June, where the graduates get to show their work, and you can buy their work at exhibition prices. Now, they're still a thousand pounds for the cheapest piece, but they are stunning. They are just so, wow, how on earth do you do, you get this to look so smooth and so nice, and you're just in awe of these students and the tutors and what they're able to do. You're looking at their handiwork and marveling. A Christian is the handiwork of God, for we are God's handiwork. And we really need to see that and to rejoice in it. We belittle God. I remember when the guy was showing his round, he just took his under his wing and showed his round, and I said to him, see your dovetail joints, are they done with a machine, or do you have to do them by hand? And he just said, it depends on the tutor. There are certain tutors that will say, even when you come to sharpen your file, you're not using a machine for that. You should be able to sharpen this chisel without using a guide, and you should be able to get it perfect, and such that he's trying to bring them on. A Christian is first and foremost the handiwork of God chosen by him. We are a work of God. Rejoice in that. If you're a

Christian, and you may only be a babe in Christ, and you might not have grown very much, but if you know anything of the gospel, if you love the Lord and understand the gospel, you are a Christian. And if you know the person sitting next to you knows that, you can pray for them with joy. You can rejoice in them. So that's the first thing. Secondly, they are partners. And this is why that Paul thrills at them. There's evidence, because God created them to do good works. All the pieces we looked at in the Chippendale furniture place, most of them, they just sit there. They don't really do anything.

They're just a lovely piece of furniture. But when God saves you and does a work in you, there is an end result. You become a tool in his hand to do good works. You're supposed to show forth fruits of righteousness. And this is what sometimes we fail on. I've met so many people as a pastor for over 30 years or so, who many have professed faith. Not the majority, certainly not, maybe 5%, 10%.

And there are some who profess faith, but you're left wondering. I experienced this quite a lot, funny enough, in my last church. People who came to profess faith, and you realize they had ulterior motives. They wanted not to be sent back to their country. And one way to do that, the best way for them to do that was to say they became a Christian. And they would go around a lot of the churches and say, whatever course, I'll go through it. Christiana Explored, I'll nod, I'll say, yeah, Jesus is great, and I'll be baptized. And as soon as I get the letter from the home office, you never see them. They're off. They're away doing. But during that time, despite the fact that they went through Christiana Explored, I used to look back and think, did they really talk about the Lord? They never would come up of their own volition and say, isn't Jesus great? Isn't the gospel great? They had no great desire to witness to others, to say, I've been saved. I'm not just standing on the rock saying, thank you for saving me. I'm reaching out my hand to save others and to pull them up from the torrent and witnessing to them. It's one of the greatest signs that you're saved. Because you realize what you've been saved from, and you cannot help but feel the plight of those who aren't saved. The people in Wester Hills are sheep without a shepherd. But they're also still under the wrath of God. That's a more serious thing. They are fumbling. They need a shepherd to lead and guide them in life. But they need a savior. Jesus' savior is a serious business. As a fireman saves from something dangerous, Jesus saves. He doesn't just save you from a bad job or a bad marriage or a bad relationship. He saves you from himself, the wrath of God. And when you come to realize that, you want to witness. And this is what they realize. And that is why they partner with the gospel. Don Carson, I recommended his wee book. It's a terrific wee book. And he talked about this area. Some versions have the word fellowship because of your fellowship in the gospel. And he rightly says, we've cheapened that word. Basically, if you invite your neighbor in for a cup of tea and a chat, that's friendship. But if you do the exact same thing with a Christian, it becomes fellowship for some reason. The conversation might be exactly the same as it was with your neighbor. But suddenly, it's fellowship. And Don Carson rightfully says that partnership is a better word. And he says, if I remember rightly, if John and Harry decide that they're going to start a fishing business and they buy the boat and they do whatever, he says, they have entered into a fellowship. That's what the word means. It's a more tangible thing. And he says this. This is a great quote, if you're writing anything down. The heart of true fellowship is self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision. Let me give you that again. The heart of true fellowship is self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision. In other words, we have the same vision of heart and mind and will. That's what brings us out on a Wednesday. Not because we've got nothing better to do. Because we love the Lord and we love the gospel and we believe in prayer and we pray. And when you get people doing this and sharing this and sharing their faith, you can have confidence that they are God's workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus to do good works. And these are the good works. These are the good deeds. And Paul knew this about this church. They didn't just say, Paul, you know, when you were here, I ticked my Bible. I wrote Apostle Paul, saved me in such and such a day, and I never heard anything. This was a church that supported Paul. He even mentions it later on, when other churches never supported me, you supported me. You said, Epaphroditus, you gave to my needs time and time again. Why? Because they loved Paul, but they loved the gospel. And they were involved in gospel ministry. That's a challenge, isn't it? I wonder if you're a Christian and you're a member of a church and throwing your weight in behind that church and making decisions at church meetings and deciding on which missionaries to support and what not to support and really becoming involved in gospel. It's quite something. I've said, you know my view on this.

[29 : 24] I encourage anybody to join a church somewhere. If it's not here, somewhere else, join a church. Become involved in that church. Become accountable to them. It's how you grow and develop. It's how the gospel will flourish. The gospel doesn't flourish with a lot of embers just scattered throughout the world all doing their own thing. But when we come together in the local church, in this New Testament, our local church fellowships, striving and working together. And Paul knew, he knew what was in their heart, but he saw the deeds and they partnered him in the gospel. A shared vision. As I look back on some of the people who profess faith in London, I thought, I don't think they had any vision.

Really, they never voiced this. They never said, the gospel's great. How can we do this? How can we do that? They came, they sang, they left. And you're left wondering, are they just like the fake Rolex watches that appear to be the real thing? I think as Christians, sometimes we are too quick to say, well, they made a profession. Who am I to judge? Paul judged, and we can. We can look. And Jesus says, by their fruits, you will know them. So, that leads me to the last one. Why did he rejoice in them?

Not only were they a work of God, not only were they partners with the Lord and with Paul, they will persevere in the gospel. Paul names the—he just comes right out of the theology behind us.

Verse 6 is such a key verse. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion. To completion. And it's quite something. It really is. And Paul knows the evidence of God's work in their lives will produce fruit. It cannot be otherwise. Jesus said in Matthew 7, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear good fruit. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Thus, by their fruits, you will recognize them. Jesus tells us not to be naive. Look at the fruits. What type of fruit is this professing Christian producing? Because he says very seriously, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. But only the one who does the will of my Father. Go into all the world and produce disciples, teaching them to obey. Sometimes as Christians, we think, well, they're saved. The obedience doesn't matter. Yes, it's not that you don't obey to be saved, but obedience is evidence that God has done a work. They are God's workmanship. He is—they are the real deal.

And Jesus knew there would be people who would profess faith, and they wouldn't be true believers. He says now in John 2, now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not trust and trust himself to them, for he knew all people. John 8, even as he spoke, many believed in him. To the Jews who had believed in him, Jesus says, if you hold to my teaching, you're really my disciples.

[32 : 48] Ephesians—sorry, Hebrews 3, we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the end. And John, writing to believers, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. If you know Christians and they are walking with the Lord and they're obedient, rejoice in them. They are a work of God, and God has done an amazing work in their life.

And Paul knew that when God begins a work, he brings it through to completion. We sang this this morning in some of those songs. We read it in 1 Peter as well, about the Lord sustaining us and keeping us and presenting us at the end. You remember Jesus, John 17, prayed. He prayed to his Father before he left the world.

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name. And he says, while I was in the world, I protected them.

And only one is lost, the son of perdition, according to the Scriptures. But see, these other 11, I protected them. Now I am going to you. You protect them by the power of your name. John 17, 15.

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them. I wonder if you believe, do you believe the Father heard that prayer? Or did he go, I might do it, I might not do it.

[34 : 22] If the Father asks that God's people are protected, and he ever lives to make intercession for us, I don't know about you, but I'm fairly confident that the Lord will protect me.

And that's what Paul says, being confident that he who begins a work in you will bring it through to completion. That's why Romans 8, that chain about being justified and glorified, called justified, glorified, It ends with saying that I am convinced that neither death nor life will, nothing will separate us from the love of God.

1 Peter 1 talks about, we have an inheritance, we read this this morning, that can never perish, spoil, or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power.

The prayer that Jesus prayed, protect them by the power of your name. I can't remember, I think I probably did mention a time in my life when I suddenly realized I had been a Christian just longer than I'd been a non-Christian.

I was saved when I was about 20, so I must have been coming up 40, and I was walking around a dual carriageway, and for whatever reason, it just popped into my mind, I think I've been a Christian for about 20 years. In about 20 years, I wasn't a Christian.

[35 : 34] So I went home and did the mass. 1960, how many days were there? 3-6-5, another 3-6-5, another 3-6-5, boom, there were so many days before I became a Christian, and then the days afterwards, up until that point.

And there wasn't weeks in it, there were only a few days. And I thrilled at the fact that God pointed that out to me, that I had been kept. For 20 years, I was under the power of the wicked one.

I was my own creation, a mess. But God came into my life, and did a work in me, poured out His Holy Spirit, showed us my sin, showed us His Son, granted me repentance and faith, put a new spring in me, a new desire for Him, a new love for Him, not perfect, but a new desire to obey it.

His commands are not burdensome, John says. We don't go, here's another command, I really hate these commands. We look at the commands, and we fail, and it affects us. Lord, forgive me, I'm a sinner, I'm just, your sanctification is a process.

You're not perfect in May the 12th, 1980. I'll not be perfect on the day I die, but I like to think there is some sort of curve that I'm becoming more like His Son. I hope that's the case. There'll be times I'll take a dive, and you get things badly wrong, and you're repenting, and then you're back, seeking to obey Him.

[36 : 54] Why? Because you're the workmanship of God. God, shielded by God's power. 1 John, this is the testimony.

God has given us, what? Eternal life. And this life is in His Son. When Jesus saves you, what do you get? You don't get the possibility of eternal life.

You get eternal life. Now, if you have eternal life, like these Rolex watches, they're just, there's nothing. There's not a Rolex component in it. It's just a fake. But when you become a Christian, what are you given?

Not just forgiveness. You are given eternal life. That is something to read. That's what you are given. You are given eternal life. I don't know what else you'll be given in this world, but nothing will compare with this.

We're spending ages trying to buy an old banger of a car that just gets us from A to B, and Lucille keeps trying to get me to get with the program, and I'm going, I've no great desire to go around and look at all heaps of rubbish.

[37 : 57] I just kind of get the excitement, and you're kicking it, and the wheel's falling off. And I looked at one yesterday, and the sill is all rusted away. And I thought, it's just for my daughter.

It's just for her to run around in. We've already got a decent car. But why would you grubby about doing that? Well, that's what we do. We need to do that. But when God does a work in us, it is quite something.

We are given eternal life. Whoever has the Son has life. And then 1 John 5. That's a great letter. If I'm here long enough, I'd love to study 1 John. He tells us why he writes this.

I write these things, he says, to those of you who believe that you may know that you have eternal life. It's quite something.

He's desperate. He does an MOT check. That's what that is. If you don't love your brother, you need to examine yourself. Maybe you're not a Christian. It's an MOT of your salvation. But he says, I write these things to you who believe that you may know that you have eternal life.

[39 : 00] In other words, the Father doesn't just save you. He wants you to know that you are saved. Your assurance of salvation. I wonder if you have that this morning.

We often close a service with the benediction in Jude. To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

To the only God, our Savior, be glory. Hear that. To him who is able. That's what Paul is saying in Philippians 1.6. Confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it on to completion.

You should rejoice in this. As long as I have breath, I will preach the eternal security of God's people. Tonight we'll be looking at this as well. In the songs of Ascent, there's an overlap between the two messages.

Jerusalem is like mountains. It's around, never shaken. It is quite something. It really is worth it. Don't let the devil say that God's done a lesser work than what he has done.

[40 : 07] Don't let him tarnish his workmanship in you and say that it's less than what it really is. Paul says, being confident of this, he who began a good work in you will bring it on to completion.

What about people who backslide? 1 John 2 says this, they went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. If they belonged to us, they would have remained with us.

But their going showed that none of them belong to us. It could well be the case that they appeared to be, but they decided not to go to another church that were owed because there's no other church up the road.

It's them or nothing. But they wandered away, they says. If they were believers, they would have remained with us. They would have loved the gospel, loved the Savior. Eventually, people reveal who they are.

You can't live the Christian life in your own strength. It can't be done. You can't say Jesus is Lord and really mean it without the Holy Spirit. You can't follow him unless you're born again. Christians are quite something.

[41 : 10] Better than anything, the Chippendale furniture guys will produce, and they produce some, really impressive pieces of equipment. We are the workmanship of God. We are God's workmanship.

By the fruits you will recognize them, Jesus says. And it's quite something. So Paul, right at the very beginning, gives thanks to God. His heart is bursting with joy.

Why? Because they're naturally nice people? No, because they're Christians. He rejoices that God has done a work in them. And that's what he rejoices in. I give thanks to God every time I remember you.

Do you wonder if we give thanks to God every time we remember every member and friend of this church who is born again by the Spirit of God? May you rejoice in this.

May you leave this place with your head held high. You're a work of God. You are a good piece of work. Still a work in progress, but you are the work of God. And we must give him thanks.

[42 : 08] Let's stand and we're going to sing. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea. Our Savior, what great truth that is.

We have a great Savior, a great gospel. It's well with our soul. It really is. Let's just close in prayer. Our loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for this Lord's Day. We thank you, Father, as we were considering our own fathers, Lord.

We thank you for you as our loving Heavenly Father, choosing us, calling us out of the world. We are yours. We thank you that Christ himself prayed for us and does pray for us.

He intercedes on our behalf. We thank you for all that we know and all that we are. And we attribute this to you. Like Paul, we thank God upon every remembrance of fellow believers and as we look at our own life.

We thank you, Father, for your work of grace in our life. We pray that we would walk worthy of the gospel. Be to us what we need. Even this coming week, we pray. And we ask these things in Jesus' name and for his glory.

[43 : 10] Amen.